

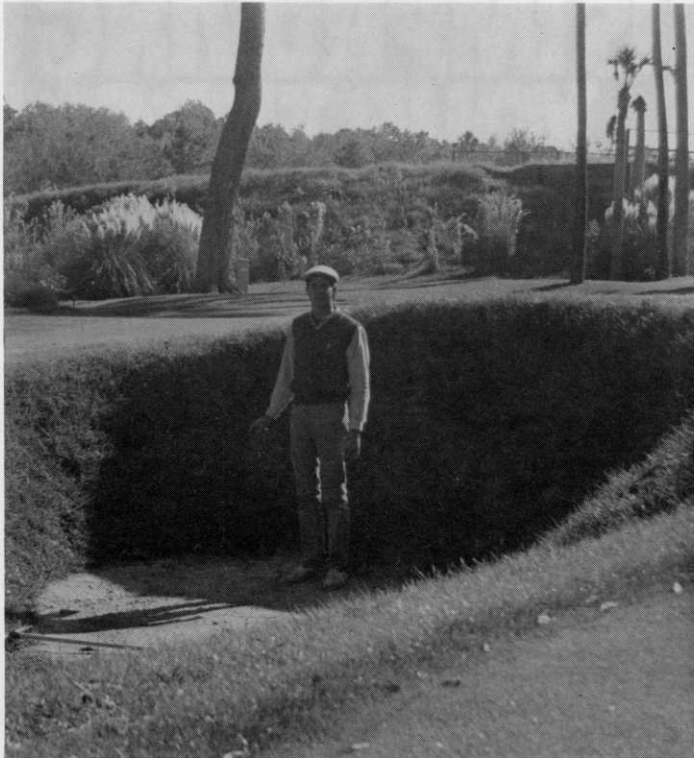
# TPC

By TIM HIERS

If you went to the average person on the street and ask them what TPC meant you might get responses like Tasmanian Peace Corps, a deadly drug or Typhoid Prevention Center. Ask a PGA Tour Professional and he will quickly inform you that it's the Tournament Players Club.

Located twenty miles southeast of Jacksonville within the Sawgrass-Arvida Resort Community the Tournament Players Club was built for major tournament golf and for a nationwide membership. Looking at the total property, the course in its natural environment could easily be a spot location to film a jungle adventure. Intertwined among trees and vegetation such as pines, large magnificent live oaks, cabbage palms, trumpet creeper, wax myrtle, scrub palm and broom sage is a golf course that's tough and demanding. Ratings from the gold pro tees are 75 and 72.5 from the blue tees. Other plant growth includes deciduous gum and maple trees along with native yaupon, Confederate jasmine and general miscellaneous North Florida vegetation.

Construction began on the 415-acre site in the spring of 1979 and opened the fall of 1980. The entire property is surrounded by a manmade canal effectively making TPC an island. Greens and tees were sprigged with Tifgreen 328 bermudagrass and winter overseeding consisted of Marvelgreen rufgrass and Saver.



The seed was applied in early October and again in the middle of November. The October application was done to prepare for qualifying school the first week in November. Donny Hammond holds the course record with a remarkable 65.

The greens average approximately 5,000 square feet and combined with trees total about four acres. There are approximately thirty-five acres of Tifway 419 bermudagrass fairways. This is a good indicator of the strict demand on accuracy. The roughs and spectator mounds encompass about sixty-five acres and are a menagerie of grasses such as common bermudagrass, carpet grass, bahamagrass, centipede and lovegrass. Much of the lovegrass grows in native sand to form a beautiful but menacing natural rough. The use of broom sage on slopes and roughs adds a unique flavor of color not found on many golf courses. The first impression of the course aside from its natural beauty is fairly simple — a good shot is usually rewarded, a bad shot can be punished immeasurably.



Every hole has water in the form of lakes, lagoons or canals. These waters hazards can create as much havoc as the dense woods, natural roughs, mounds, traps and native bunkers. For the high handicapper a combination floater-beeper ball would be highly recommended unless he or she is a golf ball representative.

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Don't be too intimidated by these remarks, for those who play TPC can direct their own destiny (to a limited degree) by the set of the markers they choose to play. During the trip around the course I observed that many were playing from the gold tees, an occurrence that reinforced my opinion of a golfer/masochist relationship. In any event, they seemed to enjoy the environment as much as the golf.

The Tournament Players Club is a culmination of dreams and planning by PGA Tour Commissioner Deane Beman. A former Tour Player, Beman took office as commissioner in March of 1974 and visualized the players having a permanent home course. A course that would host a yearly tournament to test the eminent skills of the tour's top players. Beman wanted something unique and different. In essence, this would be the Players Tournament — a fifth major championship.

To help fulfill this dream Beman collaborated with world renown architect Pete Dye. Dye designed TPC on a tract of land inhabited more by the alligators than golfers. With only 4 feet of elevation above sea level, Dye designed a golf course whose purpose other than providing a home course and tournament for Tour Players was to implement a new concept.



This concept included providing natural spectator mounds (stadium golf) that increase seating capacity hole by hole. The eighteenth hole has a seating capacity of approximately 40,000 spectators. In addition, target golf, meaning tight landing areas and small greens to test the Tour Player's accuracy and mental endurance, would also reduce overall golf course maintenance. Remember this is a *new concept*, not expected to be perfect immediately but to improve through change and modification. After its second tournament the TPC was criticized by some players because they felt good shots were not always rewarded properly and they were not adequately involved with the philosophy and design of their own course. As a result, the Tour solicited the assistance of a Players Committee consisting of Hale Irwin, Ben Crenshaw,

Jack Nicklaus, Jim Colbert and Committee Chairman Ed Sneed. The objective of the committee was to retain the character of Pete Dye's design and not make the course easier but improve it. Their basic strategy was to tighten up the landing areas and redesign greens to make them more receptive to good shots.

Since its origin the Players Committee has been very constructive and helpful. Committee Chairman Ed Sneed has been described by Golf Course Superintendent Bobby Weed as sharp and diplomatic. Weed has worked closely with the Committee and Pete Dye to modify the TPC. It is a process that will take time and patience.

After assuming responsibilities as Golf Course Superintendent on February 1, 1983, Bobby Weed can't seem to find enough time to exert his positive attitude and influence. With the constant change and modifications and the demand for top quality playing conditions, he must draw on his practical expertise and education to manage and operate the TPC. A 1976 Graduate of Lake City Community College where he received a Technical Degree in Golf Course Operations, he also studied two years of business administration at Presbyterian College in South Carolina. His experience prior to TPC included two years apprenticeship under Ron Hill at Pete Dye's Amelia Island Plantation before his firsthand job at Ponce DeLeon Golf Course in St. Augustine, Fla. He managed there for approximately one and a half years.

Bobby Weed's rise to success in the golf management industry accelerated when he accepted the golf course superintendent's job at the Long Cove Club, Hilton Head, South Carolina. It was here that Bobby Weed and Architect Pete Dye developed a relationship that formulates a key ingredient at the TPC. Working very closely with Dye, Weed learned to anticipate and understand the architect's philosophies and desires. His practical experience of building Love Cove Club from the ground up has proven invaluable at TPC. A phone call and conversation with Dye can be transposed into accurate redesign or modification on the golf course. This is a tribute to the communication and friendship that time has nurtured between Dye and Weed.

Bobby Weed has a genuine love for the Tournament Players Club. He enjoys observing the club's real owners that have inhabited the site for many years. Alligators, raccoons, armadillos, water turkeys, fish hawks, owls, great herons, egrets, sandpipers, deer, bobcat, turkeys, turtles and even an occasional bald eagle can be spotted. He addresses most of his programs with the certainty and confidence he will eventually solve them. Drainage for the most part is excellent despite the low elevation. A series of canals around and throughout the property allows water level control. Thanks to good planning, shade is a minimal problem despite a large number of trees.

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The soil profile consists mostly of sugar sand which aids drainage. During construction muck was excavated and shaped into spectator mounds. This contributed to better drainage.

Among Mr. Weed's significant problems are mole crickets and armadillos tunneling after mole crickets. Heavy play makes maintenance more difficult and the attention to spectator mounds is time consuming. Weed plans to counter this high cost by using growth regulators. With the TPC still a relatively new course, constant modifications and improvements detract from desired manicuring. Bobby Weed is willing to be patient and realizes that time will cure most of these problems.

Future projects at TPC include reseeded spectator mounds with a variety of grasses to shield areas worn by heavy foot traffic. A major project down the road will be construction of another 18 holes to accommodate resort play and reduce heavy traffic on the present course. The new design will probably offer more to resort than play tour standards. Enlarging tees is another item on the future checklist that will allow better distribution of surface wear.

The TPC has an ample maintenance complex that provides excellent facilities for the staff. The crew's lunch and locker rooms are an asset to the club management program.

Since its beginning some articles have been highly critical of the TPC. Bobby Weed feels they are unfair. One recent article published in a southern magazine criticized the budget at the TPC. Weed explains that at the time these people were looking at our budget, its composition included many capital related items. For example: 1. Re-design or modification cost; 2. Installation of parking lots; 3. Draining installations; 4. Tournament related expenditures (those with experience know the high cost); and other miscellaneous capital cost. Since the budget has been properly categorized it is very competitive with courses comparable to it. Golf Course Superintendents will be the first to insist that comparing budgets is the greatest disservice anyone can do for their club. In the fiscal year 1983 less was spent on maintenance at the TPC than in '82. Weed projects that the '84 will be 20% less than the '83 budget. That's progress that can only be obtained by a top quality professional and Bobby Weed is meeting the criteria.

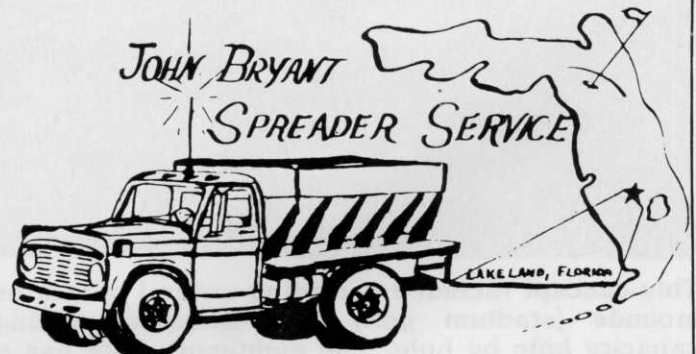
His radio communication system has provided him with an outstanding supervision program in addition to saving countless man-hours and dollars. Bobby Weed is very conscious about the key ingredient in any outstanding program — personnel. With good leadership and programs such as C.P.R. training for his employees, Weed is building a solid future for the TPC. With the use of such cost



savers as steam cleaners, a Xerox copier (that greatly improves record keeping), a good mechanic and strong preventive maintenance program, he assures himself and the TPC of steady progress. In addition to the use of growth regulators to slow growth and reduce maintenance, he also mulches to further reduce costs and hand maintenance. His constant research and contact with universities and respected golf course superintendents across the country is a testament to his eagerness to improve himself and the TPC.

The Tournament Players Club will continue to change and improve. Only the universal test of time will determine its acceptability or possible greatness. If Bobby Weed has anything to do with it, the changes for positive results will be greatly increased. ■

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